

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**POST-TRANSITION VIOLENCE IN IRAQ (2004-2005):
THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE OF AN INSIDER**

by

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ABSTRACT

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On June 28, 2004 sovereignty was transferred to the Iraqi people from the coalition provisional authority. Governing Iraq has been complicated by the violence Iraqis have since suffered. The nature of this violence in the regions north and west of Baghdad must be analyzed to provide a solution for a safe and secure Iraq. Who are those who seek a violent path? What do they hope to gain? What motivates their violence and leads them to target innocent victims? The answer to these questions will help chart a path to eliminate the threat that insurgents pose to free Iraqi people.

POST-TRANSITION VIOLENCE IN IRAQ (2004-2005):
THE MILITARY PERSPECTIVE OF AN INSIDER

"We can expect they'll do everything in their power to try to stop the march of freedom."

- President George W. Bush
Sept. 28, 2005

Escalating daily from June 28, 2004, terrorist activity in Iraq targeted any human being, man or woman, young or old, Muslim or non-Muslim, civilian or military. These increasingly large offensive attacks have been launched by terrorists who are Saddam loyalists, remaining Ba'athists, Al-Qaida members and those of other extremist Islamic movements. Increasingly large offensive attacks terrorize the Iraqi people, destroy the Iraqi infrastructure, complicate the Iraqi reconstruction and development process, and cause total confusion throughout Iraq. These terrorist organizations have enormous resources, many supporters, and appear under different guises. The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of regional violence in Iraq while analyzing the actions, intents, motivations, and relationships of the armed groups. The overview will also show that terrorist groups, in order to achieve their political agendas, often specifically target innocent people rather than coalition forces.

Overview of Regional Violence

In May of 2003, the U.S. and Iraqi military noticed a gradually increasing flurry of attacks on U.S. troops in the Sunni Triangle, especially in Baghdad and the areas around Fallujah and Tikrit. On June 9, Operation Peninsula Strike was launched through the Tigris River peninsula of Thuluya in the Sunni Triangle. A series of similar operations such as Operation Side Winder, Operation Soda Mountain, and Operation Ivy Serpent were also launched throughout the summer of 2003 in the Sunni Triangle. One in particular, entitled Operation Desert Scorpion, succeeded in destroying an encampment of over 70 foreign fighters. The guerillas began, however, adopting new and more complex tactics, such as the planting of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), the use of mortars, and better-planned ambushes. This shift in tactics indicated that there was external support for the violence.

In October of 2003, a series of four simultaneous suicide car bomb attacks on the Iraqi police and the International Red Cross was quickly followed by a sharp surge in guerilla attacks. Attacks increased to nearly 50 a day, along with a series of helicopter downings; consequently, Operation Iron Hammer was then launched in the second week of November and it brought back the use of U.S. air power for the first time since the end of the Operation Iraqi Freedom.

As a result, the number of insurgent attacks dropped to an average of 18 a day and, furthermore, Saddam Hussein himself was captured on a farm near Tikrit on December 12, 2003.

The beginning of 2004 marked a relative lull in violence. This was actually a period of reorganization during which the terrorists once again studied new U.S. tactics and planned a renewed offensive. An organized Sunni insurgency, deeply rooted in salafist ideology and motivated as well by nationalism was definitely becoming more distinct.

By April 2004, Iraqis sensed a failure on the part of the U.N. coalition to deliver its promises and nationalist dissatisfaction with foreign occupation grew. Shiite dissatisfaction with the occupation, especially among the urban poor, had been gradually increasing for some of the same reasons as among the Sunnis: the lack of public services such as water and electricity and the poor security conditions. In June of 2003, after being rejected from the Iraqi Governing Council, Muqtada Al Sadr had created a militia known as the Mahdi Army, whose mission he said was to help keep order and cleanse Iraq of "evil." As Sadr's rhetoric heated, his militia paraded through Sadr City in what seemed like a challenge to the United States and the Iraqi government.¹ On March 29, 2004, the coalition forces moved to close Sadr's newspaper, al-Hawza and arrested one of his aides on murder charges. The Sunni insurgency groups welcomed the repression of Sadr and they started working to benefit from it. They extended support to Sadr even though they hated him and they had participated in the murder of his father, Mohammad Sadiq Al-Sadr. The reason for their deceptive behavior was their overall aim to create as much trouble as possible in the country. In addition, they thought that if they could create a division in the Shi'i't community, it might help them rule Iraq again.

On March 31, 2004, four private military contractors working for the U.S. military were killed and subsequently mutilated by insurgents and a crowd of residents in the city of Fallujah. The close cooperation with local leaders was quickly suspended and the U.S. decided that it was time for a major assault to clear the city of insurgents. Consequently, on April 4, 2004, Operation Vigilant Resolve was launched to retake the city and was met with stiff and well-organized resistance resembling a Soviet-style "defense-in-depth" strategy. After three days of fighting with the U.S. Marines, the insurgents still held three-quarters of the city.² That indicates there were many professional fighters among the insurgents; the majority of them were soldiers from the previous Iraqi army.

Political pressure then began to build on the United States and the Governing Council of Iraq because they appeared unable to defeat the insurgents. After only two weeks the U.S. Marines were on the verge of completely capturing Fallujah but had not yet assumed central

control. The Marines were ordered to cordon off the city on April 30, 2004 and retreat while maintaining a perimeter around Fallujah for six months. To ensure security within Fallujah and with motivation from some former Iraqi officers, the Americans decided to create the local Fallujah Brigade, a unit that drew from former Iraqi Army members, local volunteers, and even the insurgents themselves. Unfortunately, that brigade was led by insurgents and its commanders were MG Jassim Mohammad and MG Abdullah, whose son was one of the insurgent leaders. They had caused the destruction of the 505th and the 506th Battalions of the Iraqi National Guard at Fallujah.³ The U.S. and Iraqi Ministry of Defense discovered the duplicitous nature of the Fallujah Brigade and it was then disbanded.

On June 28, 2004, the occupation of Iraq was formally ended by coalition forces which transferred power to a new Iraqi Government led by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Guerrillas then offered a \$285,000 reward for Allawi's assassination on July 18, 2004. Between September and November of 2004, officials from the U.S.-led coalition and Allawi's government began drawing up plans to retake guerilla strongholds prior to the parliamentary elections planned for January 2005 in Iraq. The legitimacy of the elections would be compromised if some of the Iraqi cities, especially Fallujah and Sadr City, remained under the guerilla control.

The first of these offensives began on September 1, 2004 in Tal Afar, located west of Mosul, and the next began on September 30, 2004 in a surprise attack on guerilla-controlled Samarra. Yet another offensive began soon afterwards on October 5, 2004 against Sunni insurgents through northern Babil province just south of Baghdad, an area also known as the "Triangle of Death". During this time negotiations involving the Iraqi interim government, tribal leaders, and Mahdi Army officials successfully brought a resolution to the fighting in Sadr City. Then on November 8, 2004 the assault on Fallujah began as American and Iraqi forces invaded the militant stronghold of Fallujah in an operation at Al-Fajr which captured or killed many insurgents. A day later U.S. units penetrated the heart of the city and gradually U.S. and Iraqi forces pushed the main insurgent force into the southwestern part of the city. Insurgent losses during that same time period were believed to be much heavier than in the earlier April operation. Over 2,000 insurgents may have been killed, according to U.S. military estimates.⁴

Insurgents fleeing Fallujah filtered into the northern tip of Babil province and Mosul in northern Iraq and Baghdad itself. Mainly affecting Iraqi civilians, the campaign of suicide and car bombings intensified to the worst point ever seen, especially in Mosul.⁵ On November 16, 2004 over 3,000 U.S. troops and a similar number of Iraqi troops launched a fierce attack against them; consequently, in December 2004 the coalition reported that they had killed or

captured at least 15,000 guerillas over the course of 2004. At the same time thousands of Iraq security forces, as well as Iraqi civilians, were killed also.

On January 31, 2005 an election occurred for a government that would draft a permanent constitution. Although some violence and the lack of widespread Sunni participation marred the event, most of the eligible Kurdish and Shi'ite population participated. Following the elections, insurgent attacks declined and the U.S. casualty rates decreased as negotiations continued to determine the makeup of the new government. In April 2005, as political progress slowed, guerilla attacks gradually began to rise once more. On April 28, 2005 when the new government led by Prime Minister Ibrahim Ja'fari was announced, car bombings and suicide bombings increased to a level never seen previously in the war. Terrorists were determined to take control of Iraq and refused to acknowledge an Iraqi government. As of June 21, 2005 at least 1,617 people had been killed by insurgents fighting for authority over Iraq and not simply against the foreign force.

During early and mid-May the U.S. also launched Operation Matador, an assault of around 1,000 marines in the ungoverned region of western Iraq. Its goal was to eradicate suspected insurgent supply routes of volunteers and materiel from Syria. As of July 2005, insurgent groups also started to attack civilians in increasing numbers, and on July 17, 2005 a fuel truck bomb killed 98 people south of Baghdad as car bombs detonated in the Iraqi capital. The insurgency continued its offensive against the new Iraqi government by various factions.

On October 15, 2005 when the Sunnis, especially in the provinces of Al-Anbar and Salah Al-Din (Saddam's birthplace), participated in the referendum on the Iraqi Constitution, they assembled to vote against it; however, the constitution received the necessary two-thirds vote. Consequently, the Sunnis changed their minds and decided to participate in the election for the Iraqi National Assembly according to the Cairo Conference recommendations which had been led by the Arab League. This election might have been their last opportunity to return to power. On December 15, 2005, the Iraqi elections were held and the first results of the vote showed that the Sunnis' Alliance placed second after the United Iraqi Alliance. The Sunni leaders started loudly claiming that there was vote tampering in some of the polling stations and they threatened to return to violence.

Armed Groups

The majority of the armed group fighters do not know their command or the resources of their funds. In addition, they do not know who draws their plans and strategic aims. The majority of them, moreover, do not know their real enemy and their ideology is subsequently

unclear. They are a mixture of Islamic, national, patriotic, hireling, criminal, and retaliatory components. Among the insurgents, the Ba'ath party ideology is one of the better-known philosophies. The BBC stated on October 5, 2005 that

the insurgency has no single spokesman, nor any shared long-term aim. Washington points to their presence as proof that neighboring nations such as Iran and Syria are trying to destabilize Iraq. The Shia Badr Brigade and the Kurdish Peshmerga are not included, as these are militia groups that do not have a record of attacking US targets or their Iraqi government allies.⁶

The armed groups are not unified and they attempt to achieve different goals. The two militia groups, Badr Brigade and Peshmerga, loyally support their parties who won the Iraqi elections.

After their initial escape from the field, the Ba'athists emerged as links in the financial and logistic support for the armed groups. They used the proceeds of 5% percent of the Iraq oil export that they have hoarded from 1972 until the fall of their regime in 2003. This vast amount of wealth has been saved and deposited in international banks under different names. They planned to use this money to return to power.⁷ The release of senior Ba'ath party commanders on Dec. 27, 2005, allowed them to once again utilize that money. Ignoring the aims of various armed groups, the Ba'athists stand ready to cooperate with anyone in order to regain authority and return to power, or at least maintain chaos in Iraq since they believe the state of chaos will make them appear to be the best hope for Iraq. They claim that under their command there has been stability and prosperity, and, therefore, they are willing to cooperate even with their previous enemies such as the Communist party. For all of the above reasons, the Ba'athists are a serious threat to Iraqi stability.

Despite the differences among the armed groups and their members' individual, personal and cultural characteristics, they share some common points of agreement. They claim that Iraq is the Republic of Iraq under the leadership of their captive hero (Saddam Hussein) under the control of the Ba'ath party. According to the Ba'ath party members, the United States of America, by launching a war on March 19, 2003 against Iraq, has overthrown its legal government, and replaced it with a traitorous government, even if that government has been elected by the people in a democratic manner. They consider all the foreign armed forces, ministries, agencies and local organizations which are on Iraqi soil, even those resulting from international resolutions, elections and/or referendums, loyal to occupation forces and betrayers of Iraq. Accordingly, they are considered legitimate targets for attacks. The armed groups have announced that their armed operation will continue even if the foreign forces leave Iraq, because the current government is illegitimate, and it must be overthrown and stripped of its authority.⁸

The armed groups identify the resistance as the armed operations which are led and managed by the Ba'ath party. Their attacks usually are executed by the members of Ba'ath party, the previous army, Republican Guard, special Republican Guard, national security (Mukhabarat) and special security who are not allowed to join the new Iraqi security force. In addition, there are many foreign and Arab fighters who were recruited or lured by Saddam's money before his regime collapsed. Recently, they have started to recruit many of the unemployed and poor Iraqi youth.⁹

A variety of Sunni armed groups have now been identified. Ian Beckett states, "They are united only in the sense of possessing "negative" goals in opposition to the U.S. presence: seeking return to the former status in which the Sunni minority exercised power since the Ottoman period."¹⁰ Other Sunni armed groups are anti-Saddam nationalist ones still resentful of the U.S. and Western presence in Iraq while still others are Islamist groups with some members trained overseas as foreign nationals, the latter including Syrians, Saudis, Yemenis, and Sudanese. Some activities have been the work of criminals or criminal organizations since large numbers of criminals were released from Iraqi prisons at the end of the war. Furthermore, some of them hire themselves out for attacks against the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, U.S. troops and Coalition forces.¹¹ Among the armed groups, the nationalist ones seem the most sincere concerning Iraqi resistance since they strive to forward Iraqi interests. They participate in the political process in order to achieve Iraq's stability and then they will negotiate the Coalition troop's departure through politics.

From the terrorists' point of view, all the Iraqi official actions after April 9, 2003 are invalid and illegal activities and part of the occupation. Terrorists believe that they are the real Iraqis and that they have the right to lead Iraq; furthermore, no one has an equivalent right, even if he is a member of the majority or has been elected by the people. In his *Strategy Research Project Terrorism Beheadings: Cultural and Strategic Implications*, Ronald H. Jones writes:

After the interim Iraqi government assumed power on June 28th, 2004, there was an increase of kidnapping attacks on foreigners. These had the desired effect of causing several companies to remove workers and several countries to withdraw troops and cease helping with Iraq's reconstruction. Then, in the fall of 2004, the focus of the attacks shifted away from foreigners towards the Iraqis themselves, such as police officers, national guardsmen, election commission members, political candidates, and prominent government officials. Partisan targets included Shiite and Kurdish citizens and Christian churches. Violence was directed at the Iraqis to lessen support for the interim government, disrupt elections, and continue the chaotic conditions that favored the militants. The militants labeled these Iraqis as "traitors".¹²

This quote stresses the fact that the terrorists are battling against Iraq and its people more than the occupation forces.

Saddam loyalists dream of bringing Saddam Hussein back to power, or at least of reshaping a similar regime from the same areas and tribes which had previously shaped Saddam's regime. Furthermore, they want to prevent the establishment of an Iraqi federation or Iraqi union because they believe it will cause them to lose financial resources. Believing that dominance is the only way to distribute the homeland's income fairly, these armed groups have agreed to keep the United States as busy as possible in Iraq in order to avoid the danger of American interference in Syria, Iran, and Saudi Arabia, especially after the appearance of U.S. strategy to remove the governing regimes in those countries throughout the 21st century and replace them with democratic rule. Although there is no decisive evidence of Saudi Arabia's complicity, one can still deduce from their behavior toward their 40 citizens who were captured in Syria on their way to Iraq that the Saudi government released them after their return to Saudi Arabia, while they (Saudis) acted harshly against any attempt to encroach their security.¹³

Baathists are another armed group fighting the American presence in Iraq, not because they oppose that presence, but because they consider it the main reason for the loss of their hegemony in Iraq; consequently, they fear that it will expand in the future to overthrow all the similar regimes in the region who support them. Some of the armed groups have true Islamic intent; and these Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds consider the American presence as a dangerous threat to Muslims. They dispute American foreign policy in the Middle East, especially the strong support that the United States administration has been giving to Israel against the Palestinian Authority. Other groups like Al-Taifa Al-Mansura, the National Front to Liberate Iraq, the United Front to Liberate Iraq, and the National Front for Fedayeen represent types of insurgent groups that are not as thoroughly Islamist because the majority of their followers are secularists and Saddam loyalists who previously paid no attention to Islam. These armed groups find that religious enticement is the best way to lure the young people and to obtain the support of Iraqi, Arab and Islamic society.

The third kind of armed group is the extremist Sunni who have adopted salafist or Wahhabist ideas and believe that the Shiites are polytheistic. The Sunni think that Shiite control of Iraq is the real future danger that will destroy Islam from inside. The majority of this group are Iraqi Sunni Arabs and some foreign Muslims, and they have been supported by Saudi Arabian *shaykhs*.¹⁴ Saudi Arabian *shaykhs* have been supporting them because they believe that a Shiite-dominated Iraq will provide future support for the wronged Saudi Shiite minority.

The fourth kind of armed group are Shiite and include Muqtada Al Sadr's followers. The majority of them are not well-educated, such as people who are living in the poorest area of Baghdad (Al Sadr City). They have been duped by the slogans resonating with political themes which have been popularized through the malicious intent of sponsors like Muthanna Al Dhari. The leaders of this group are politically inexperienced because they were isolated in the educational system of the Hawzah. Furthermore, there are many corrupt elements within this group. For example, Fedaeyee Saddam joined them either to participate in the chaos or to block their transit to power. .

The remainder of Saddam's loyalists, after their initial disappearance from the majority of Iraqi neighborhoods, especially in the middle and south of Iraq, have started to return to action in and around of Baghdad. The majority of them are poorly educated, but Saddam made them masters of Iraqi society, for instance some were chiefs of the Ba'ath Party Divisions. Although eighty percent of them have not completed primary school, Saddam commissioned them with imaginary ranks which make them as important as the commanders of the divisions and brigades who have graduated from Iraqi and international universities. These types of loyalists continue to fight either to bring their Saddam back or create a similar regime, and they try to polarize any Iraqis against the new government.

Among the insurgents, mercenaries provide the backbone of the armed groups in Iraq and they are ready to work with each group no matter what its aims are. Since their main objective is income, they do not execute suicide operations. They are not to be ignored because their activities include kidnapping, beheading, stealing, and cutting off roads and other detrimental acts against the Iraqi people. Kurds also have been participating in the current Iraqi violence. These Kurdish insurgents consist of the extremists Kurdish Muslims, especially Ansar Al Islam, criminals with records and who are wanted under Kurdistan law, and, finally, those who have cooperated with Saddam's regime and committed many crimes against the Kurdish people. All the above groups have participated in the chaos to gain a mercenary income or to exact revenge on Iraqis.

In addition to the mercenaries, there are thousands of criminals in Iraq¹⁵ who have widely participated in the Iraqi violence. Saddam Hussein may have released them from Abu Ghraib prison on October 20, 2002 to add to the public chaos. The Iraqi intelligence information indicates that all the armed groups have been coordinating with them to execute their criminal operations¹⁶. Standard criminal psychology suggests these criminal elements lack empathy and harbor deep resentment against society:

The Arab and foreign fighters form a large ratio of the armed groups' fighters. Saddam Hussein brought them to Iraq before March 19th, 2003 as volunteers or mercenaries. They were led by the Central Command of Arab Mujahideen which had announced that it has 8,000 fighters.¹⁷

These fighters had no military preparation for encounters with the Coalition Forces. They were enticed to Iraq by the Ba'ath party leaders who abandoned them in the Iraqi streets. Consequently, they sustained many injuries during the fighting. The irritated Iraqi soldiers, especially in the middle and south of Iraq damaged their capacities severely, and they distrust the people in these areas. They are the executors of the suicide operations and they shaped the backbone of terrorism in Iraq until the end of 2004.¹⁸

U.S. and Iraqi government sources say al-Qaeda has recruited foreign fighters for its operations in Iraq. A September 2005 report released by a U.S. think-tank, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, states:

Foreign volunteers account at most for 10% . . . of the insurgency, the remainder being Iraqi Sunni Arabs. According to the report, most of the foreign insurgents have come from Algeria, Syria, Yemen and Sudan. Saudis form an influential minority in the foreign contingent because of the money they bring and because of the media coverage their deaths generate, the report says.¹⁹

Regardless of the numbers of foreign fighters, they are influential in creating havoc and civil unrest in Iraq. All of them, furthermore, have ties to the Al-Qaeda network in one way or another.

Due to the very recent reestablishment of Iraqi security and intelligence, there are no accurate statistics for the numbers of Arab and foreign fighters in Iraq. On August 27, 2005, the *Al- Sabah* newspaper published that in the summer of 2003 the number of Arab and foreign fighters was larger than the local fighters in many areas such as Fallujah, Ramadi, Baghdad, Baquba, Balad, Tikrit and Mosul. Some of the Saudi separatists said that 5,000 Saudi fighters have existed in Baghdad since November of 2003. The CIA also believes that, there are 15,000 Saudi fighters since September of 2003 and about 1,700 Jordanians have been in Al Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Diyala.²⁰

There are joint goals that some armed groups are working to achieve as well. Since some groups are fighting on behalf of regional dictatorships,²¹ they fear that Iraq democracy will set a dangerous example to their people and will challenge their authority. Some of the armed groups seek to demolish the new Iraqi political structure which, they think, will hasten the collapse of the democratic process in Iraq. After the Cairo Conference in November 2005, it

has become clear to the Iraqis that the armed groups have been aiding some Iraqi factions, and these factions such as the Islamic Party and the Muslim Scientific Community have been exploiting the slogan of “governing in exchange for stopping terrorism.” These armed groups and factions are trying to bring back some high level Ba’athists to power. Consequently, the aim of the armed groups is to expand terror in Iraq and obstruct all civilized aspects of Islamic culture which would counter salafi influence.

The armed groups in Iraq want to inflame sectarian divisions because they provide the best environment for the resurgence and survival of the terrorist and the armed groups. With the objective of preventing diplomacy in Iraq, the armed groups have been targeting all those working and cooperating with new Iraqi government. They targeted the Arab diplomatic missions (the Egyptian Ambassador, Moroccan Embassy employees, the Omani Embassy, and the kidnapping of the Jordanian Embassy driver).²² Those attacks influenced the media and have ensured the ambiguity of the Iraqi situation for other Arab and Islamic nations. These attacks enabled terrorist recruitment of young people in the name of jihad. Paradoxically, some armed groups, especially those who are allied with the previous regime, may also feel that the presence of the foreign forces is the only way to insure their safety. Otherwise, the Iraqis will take revenge on them. These groups are trying to extend the American presence in Iraq so that they will not have to flee Iraq with an American troop withdrawal.

Targets

While occupation forces appear to be the primary targets for insurgent attacks, the specific targets, however, are the Iraqi people. American troops and their allies have been in the northern part of Iraq since 1991, but Islamist groups did not attack them. Al Qaida members are trying to shift the focus from their defeat in Afghanistan and prove that they are still effective in fighting the Americans. When they were defeated by the Iraqi armed forces at Tall Afar and Husaiba, they had been planning to attack the Jordanian capital Amman.²³ They wanted to demonstrate their continuing activism, whether their victim was a starving Iraqi from Al-Kadhimia in Baghdad or a bridegroom dreaming of his wedding night in Amman (Zarqawi claimed that the wedding celebrants were not the intended targets; he meant to target US and Israel intelligence.).²⁴

The means employed by the armed groups are barbarian and feral, and they do not represent the genuine Islamic jihad or resistance. The behavior of the insurgents is incongruent with Iraqi ethical, cultural and military values. Since their intent is to annihilate as many innocent people as they can, they are not solely targeting the occupation forces. (Baathist and

al Qaeda members opportunistically announce their responsibility for such operations because the other groups have no web sites.) Furthermore, the armed groups slay their innocent victims in barbaric ways as with the killing of more than a hundred poor workers at Al-Oroba square in Baghdad. Sometimes they have used ambulances to kill their wounded victims before they are hospitalized. The majority of them have beheaded their victims and then violated the corpses. Moreover, many times they targeted their enemies' relatives. The attacks on places of worship and religious men regardless of whether they are Shiite, Sunni or Christian is done to inflame sectarian division and start a civil war. Professionals like doctors or university professors are the most common targets in Iraq now. The goal of the insurgents is to compel these professionals to emigrate from Iraq, thereby preventing their participation in Iraq's rebuilding process in order to make it slow and chaotic.

In addition to the Iraqi public, fuel transportation is now another central target for insurgent activities. Armed groups have attacked the oil pipeline network, and previously these insurgents have prevented the arrival of food supplies by attacking the trucks.²⁵ In Al-Suwaireh they are beheading the truck drivers and stealing the cargo. The armed groups have figured out that the condolence councils (funeral observances), especially of their victims, are the best places to prepare and change public opinion against them; therefore, there are many attacks on such councils.²⁶ While the insurgency attacked the trucks in order to burn them and kill their drivers, coalition supply trucks, however, have not been attacked. This insurgent activity is trying to cause a fuel shortage, resulting in the increased prices of fuel which would then cause a slump in public opinion.²⁷

The Iraqi Army and police still remain key targets for the majority of the attacks. All the armed groups have figured out that these two institutions are the protective shell of Iraq. The Iraqi security forces are critical factors for reducing violence and terror in Iraq. Therefore, the armed groups are attacking the patrols, camps, recruiting stations, training bases, and the family members of the army and the police. In her monograph, *A Hundred Osamas: Islamists Threats and the Future of Counterinsurgency*, Sherifa Zuhur states, that "both Zarqawi and Abu Maysara explained that killing of Iraqi security forces is licit, even though they are Muslims, because their cooperation with the infidels renders them apostates"²⁸ Accordingly, many attacks and armed operations have been performed against the Iraqi armed forces and the police members or their families.

There are still other actions which demonstrate the venom of the armed groups. Attempts to poison and pollute water resources are examples of actions that cause collective suffering and victimize children, women, the elderly and even animals.²⁹ Another armed group activity is

the kidnapping of wealthy people. Usually the kidnappers demand the victim's family to pay a large sum of money, yet often they kill the victim after receiving ransom money in order to avoid exposing their identities. According to testimonies from captured members aired on the Iraqi media, armed groups routinely rape women who are kidnapped.³⁰

Because many members of the armed groups have been employed in security positions, they are experienced with using the internet and media channels. They have taped their attacks and victims' beheadings to release them and terrify people; however, they have adopted different names and backgrounds during the taping processes. During the Fallujah operation the Iraqi army units found a house where beheadings had taken place. In each room different groups' names and flags were found, such as the Khalid Ben Alwaliid Companies, Ali Ben Abi Talib regiments and Twentieth Revolution Regiments.³¹ These armed groups tried to inflate their numbers with these deceitful tactics and, furthermore, all of these armed groups have internet websites to publish their activities such as Al Basra Net, Tawheed Net, etc. Many television channels cooperate with armed groups such as Al-Jazeera in Qatar, and this channel in particular has supported the violence in Iraq since Saddam's regime fell because Oday Saddam Hussein was one of the founders of this channel.³²

All these armed groups announce a similar political message: they are fighting against the occupation forces to liberate Iraq. Khalaf Olain announced on Al-Jazeera that he is the "father of the resistance" and he was actually the first Iraqi who assented to American troops entering Al-Anbar in April 2004. The armed groups have constantly warned the world about the Iraqi/Iranian relationships. They claim that Iraq will become a part of Iran through the new Shiite dominance. Calling for an anti-imperialist struggle and warning of a Shiite take-over are the best ways to motivate Arab and Muslim emotions and lure youth to execute suicide operations.

Conclusion

Based on this study of the actions, intents, motivations and relationships of the armed groups appearing after the transition of Iraqi sovereignty on June 28, 2004, the majority of the active armed groups are terrorist groups despite the fact that there is a nationalist Iraqi resistance to the American presence in Iraq. These insurgents use terror as a primary means to achieve their objectives and they attack innocent people instead of the foreign forces since they believe that is the best way to pressure the new Iraqi command; furthermore, they are sure their objectives cannot be accomplished through the normal democratic process. Although they ceased their terrorist actions during the elections process, they have reverted once again to

employing violence against the Iraqi people when they discovered that their authority would be threatened.

Except for the National Iraqi Resistance which has signaled that they would participate in the political process, all the other armed groups in Iraq are defeatable. Their vulnerability lies within their weak relations with the patriotic Iraqi citizens and they are fighting for their interests. Furthermore, insurgents do not have any support in the southern and northern regions of Iraq since they concentrated their operations in Baghdad and other regions which have not been affected by Saddam's regime because people there have not suffered like people elsewhere. They are, moreover, trying to heighten sectarian enmity between Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis to ensure continuity of their support. Iraqis have strong mutual relations whether they are Shiites, Sunnis, Arabs or Kurds. Since Iraqis have recognized that the best path to solve their country's dilemmas is unity, gradually people supporting the insurgents have started to be annoyed by their presence; consequently, in Fallujah (the main center for the insurgency fighters) people decided to eject all the armed group fighters.³³ Fallujah's citizens discovered that these armed groups had exploded the recruiting center on January 9, 2006 and assassinated Shaikh Hamza Al-Esawi, one of the clerics of Fallujah and its local council member.

Under such circumstances, it is critical for the United States to avoid intervention in Iraqi internal affairs. Rather, coalition forces should empower the Iraqi command and then work with them to assist Iraqis during this critical political time. The newly elected Iraqi government must endeavor at the same time to collect and unify Iraqi society, forget all past disputes, avoid sectarian discrimination and prevent external intervention from any side which will enable both the U.S. and Iraqis to diminish the power of the insurgents and armed groups, and erode their linkages with the Iraqi people.

Endnotes

¹ Ali Al- Husaini. "Resistance in Iraq," *Al-Sabah* (27 August 2005).

² Iraqi MOD reports.

³ Iraqi MOD, Falluja Brigade Committee's Final Report. (September 2004).

⁴ *Al- Sabah*, (28 November 2004).

⁵ Ali Al- Husaini. "Resistance in Iraq". *Al-sabah* (27 August 2005).

⁶ BBC News "Who Are the Insurgents," (5 October 2005).

⁷ Samier Sumiadaee (UN Iraqi Mission Ambassador) Lecture to Seminar Three USAWC class, 2006.

⁸ *Al-Basra Net* 15 December 2005. <http://www.albasrah.net/index1.html>

⁹ Interview with some captured terrorists. *Al-Iraqiya* (8 March 2005).

¹⁰ Ian F. W. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq: An Historical Perspective* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, January 2005) p..4.

¹¹ Interview with captured band members. Babil Television, 15 April 2005. Also see Hussain Ali Ghalib "The Trio- alliance Which Threatens Iraq," *Al Sabah* (1 February 2006).

¹² Ronald H. Jones. "Terrorism Beheadings: Cultural and Strategic Implications." *Carlisle Papers in Security Strategy* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute , USAWC, June 2005) p. 7.

¹³ Prince Turki Al-Faisal (Ambassador to the United States) Public Address, USAWC Middle East Symposium (1 December 2005).

¹⁴ *Al-Majos*. Available at <http://www.tv.almjos.com/>

¹⁵ *Al-Qadisia* (21 October 2002).

¹⁶ Hussain Ali Ghalib "The Trio-alliance which Threatens Iraq," *Al-Sabah* (1 February 2006).

¹⁷ Ali Al- Husaini. "Resistance in Iraq," *Alsabah* (27 August 2005).

¹⁸ Iraqi MOD daily reports up to 10 March 2005.

¹⁹ BBC News, "Who Are the Insurgents?" (5 October 2005).

²⁰ *Al-Sabah*, (27 August 2004).

²¹ Hashim Al Sudany, "National Disillusion or Thieves' Partnership Dividing" available at <http://www.iraqigovernment.org/index.htm>

²²On 23 December 2005 armed groups kidnapped the Jordanian driver.

²³ The Jordanian hotels were attacked on 9 November 2005.

²⁴ Yaser Al-Za'atrah, "Jordanian Explosives and their Impact on Al-Qaeda". *Al-Raey'* (16 November 2005).

²⁵ The armed groups had controlled the roads of Baghdad-Kut, Baghdad-Babil during November and December of 2005 to prevent the food supply among the provinces.

²⁶On 12 September 2004 a funeral observance was attacked in Al-Khalis. Funeral observance were attacked al Miqdadiya on 1 January 2006.

²⁷ *Al- Sabah* (6 January 2006).

²⁸ Sherifa Zuhur, *A Hundred Osamas: Islamists Threats and the Future of Counterinsurgency* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, January 2006) p. 43.

²⁹ "Four Insurgents Were Captured During Their Attempt to Poison Al Tarmia's water's station. Baghdad. Iraqi MOD Daily Report, (7 August 2004)

³⁰ Shuqair Al Mosuley and others' testimony. *Al-Iraqiyya* (November 2004).

³¹ LTG Abdul Qader Mohammed Jassim, Iraqi Army Commander's post-operation briefing.

³² *Al- Arabiyya* aired a videotape of a meeting between Oday Saddam Hussayn and the Director of *Al- Jezeera* (November 2004).

³³ "Armed Groups in Falluja Joined the Iraqi People to Fight Al Qaeda." *Al- Sabah* (21 January 2006).

